



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FLEMISH FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES IN NORTH AMERICA (1674-1738)

The story of the Flemish Franciscans who came to North America in 1674, and whose missionary activities have added such a glorious page to the history of the explorations in the middle North West of our country during the seventeenth century, is a very remarkable and interesting one. It reminds us that Divine Providence has Its own way in shaping the destinies of men and in accomplishing, through events that are untoward, Its merciful designs for the salvation of souls.

When King Louis XIV of France in 1667, by waging war against Spain, enhanced the claims of his queen to the sovereignty of the Low Countries, he stopped only when he had wrested the southern part of Flanders from the Spanish Monarchy. The Franciscans of the conquered territory were forced by the King to transfer their obedience to the French Province of Artois, the Superiors of which did not give an overwarm welcome to these unsolicited recruits.¹ The same fate befell the Franciscan Friars of Burgundy which, under the name of Franche Comté, was definitely conquered in 1674.

That very year, Bishop de Montmorency-Laval had prevailed upon Pope Clement X to make Quebec, in Canada, a Canonical See and appoint him its first Bishop.² For such an important step to be taken by Rome created a sensation. The fact that a scion of one of the noblest families of the realm, who had already spent many years in Canada, should have such a confidence in its future as to go and reside permanently in New France gave a new impetus to emigration.

By a singular coincidence, Robert de la Salle had come from America to France to lay before the Court the urgent appeal of Governor de Frontenac for immediate help to keep in check the

¹ JOHN GILMARY SHEA, *The Catholic Church in Colonial Days*, vol. I, p. 321, New York, 1892.

² François de Montmorency-Laval had been proclaimed by Pope Alexander VII, Titular Bishop of Petrarca and Vicar-Apostolic of New France. He was consecrated in Paris, December 8th, 1658, and landed in Canada, 1659. He became Bishop of Quebec in 1674.

English Colony of New York. He was convinced that it had its eye on the fur-trade of the Far West, aye, perhaps an undue hankering after conquest of Western Territory. If France wanted to keep its hold on Canada, it became imperative to organize a new expedition, to encourage colonization and to extend its power towards the West. Colbert, the all-powerful minister of the Grand Monarque, felt the importance of this appeal to his political sagacity; he approved the new expedition. King Louis XIV placed it under the leadership of the Chevalier René Robert de la Salle, whom he knighted. In 1673, previous to his coming to France, Frontenac had made him commandant of the Fort of his name which he built on Lake Ontario.

Be it said to the credit of the king, that whilst he was an overbearing conqueror and anything but an exemplar of Catholic life, he was deeply religious at heart. He always provided liberally for the presence of priests on the field of battle and on board the vessels sent abroad on expedition or adventure. Not only did he have at heart the spiritual needs of soldiers and sailors, but he had been heard to express great concern about the religious instruction, conversion and care of the Indians whose territory he sought to annex.

From the fact that Bishop de Montmorency had had many misunderstandings with the Sulpicians and with religious who sought their jurisdiction from the Archbishop of Rouen, in disregard of his own authority as Vicar-Apostolic,⁸ we may presume that he himself requested that the priests connected with this expedition should be Franciscans.

I.

REV. LOUIS HENNEPIN, O. F. M.

Among the Flemish Franciscans forcibly annexed to the French Province of the Order was Father Louis Hennepin, born in Ath about 1640, and belonging to the Province of the Netherlands. He was an enthusiastic admirer of the Missionaries of his Order, very fond of travel, a natural propensity which his Superiors had indulged by allowing him to visit Rome and to spend a long time in Italy

⁸ *Histoire de la Colonie Française au Canada*, VILLEMARIE, *Bibliothèque Paroissiale*, 1866. Vol. III, c. III, *passim*.

and Germany, in the various Convents of his Order. Upon his return in Flanders, being a zealous priest and a hard worker, he obtained permission to join the troops, as chaplain, during the Spanish war, and underwent great hardships.⁴ But his Franciscan Superior, William Herinx, who later became Bishop of Ypres,⁵ manifested his dislike to the wandering life of the young friar and he ordered him to remain in the Convent of Halles in Hainaut where he performed the office of preacher for one year. He then resumed his military ministry and in 1673, we find him at Maestricht, where as chaplain, he administered the Sacraments to over three thousand wounded soldiers.⁶

Busy as he was, the energetic priest never gave up his inclination to visit "remoter countries," as he calls them. When Monseigneur de Laval recalled the Franciscans to Canada in 1670, he had, time and again, expressed his desire to share in their missionary labors.

And behold, part of his Province was annexed by Louis XIV to the French Province of Artois, and the Bishop of Quebec was about to leave for Canada. Providential, indeed! In that very year 1674, Fra Hennepin was chaplain of the troops and took part in the battle of Seneffe. This circumstance itself would have attracted the attention of the Government to the energetic friar, if indeed he himself had not petitioned the Court for a position on the Expedition. He and his brother Flemings were assigned to the expedition; his French Superior, being rather happy to allow the recent Flemish recruits to withdraw, readily agreed to their departure for Canada.

That is how, Fra Louis Hennepin, Recollect Franciscan of the Province of Flanders by birth and choice, but of the Province of Artois by order of the King of France and disposition of Divine Providence, officially became a member of the Canadian expedition and was on board La Salle's ship when on the 14th day of July, 1675, it sailed from La Rochelle to New France.

⁴In the seventeenth century the Franciscan Recollects were chaplains in the army and won renown as preachers. I wonder if the Capuchin, Father Joseph, "Son Eminence Grise," secretary to Cardinal Richelieu, had secured that army privilege for his Franciscan Brethren?

⁵P. B. GAMS, O. S. B., *Series Episcoporum*, Vol. 1, p. 252, Ratisbonne, 1873. This Superior of the Netherland Province ruled the See of Ypres from the 24th of December, 1677, to August 15th, 1678.

⁶J. G. SHEA, *The Catholic Church in Colonial Days*, Vol. 1, p. 321.

With him went Fr. Gabriel de la Ribourde, a Burgundian,⁷ and Fathers Zenobius Membré, Luke Buisson and Melitho Watteaux, Flemings.

The Bishop of Quebec, Monseigneur de Montmorency-Laval had availed himself of the Government Expedition to return to Canada with an official display which he deemed conducive and even necessary to maintain his Episcopal jurisdiction and authority.⁸ The journey across the Atlantic lasted two months and gave the Prelate, by daily intercourse on board, an opportunity to appreciate the eminent qualities of mind and character of Fr. Hennepin, who was to become one of the most famous explorers of North America. We may presume that a similar experience made Sieur de la Salle ask for the Franciscan Friar to accompany him on his Northwestern Expedition to the Mississippi in 1679.⁹

The French ship, having successfully withstood attacks from Turkish, Algerian and Tunisian pirates, happily arrived at Quebec in September, 1675.

RIGHT REV. CAMILLUS P. MAES, D. D.,
Bishop of Covington.

(To be continued.)

⁷ J. G. SHEA, *op. cit.*, p. 321. He belonged to the Franciscan Province of Franche Comté, likewise annexed to France in 1674. This statement is only made on circumstantial evidence. Indeed, Shea himself says somewhere else that Fr. Gabriel came to Canada in 1670, which would make him of the party brought to Canada by the Bishop in that year. Hence, this is said, "sous toute réserve," and, if necessary, subject to correction.

⁸ *Histoire de la Colonie*, etc., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, chap. III, *passim*.

⁹ J. G. SHEA, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 321, gives the dislike of Governor Frontenac and of La Salle for the secular clergy and the Jesuits as the reason for this. Our version seems to us to fit the circumstances more naturally; one reason does not exclude the other.